DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 349 HE 020 164

AUTHOR Oosting, Kenneth W.
TITLE Presidential Management Style in the Christian, Liberal Arts College.
PUB DATE 31 May 85
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented to Deans of the Christian College Coalition Conference on "The Task of Evangelical Higher Education" (Wheaton, IL, May 31, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; *Church Related Colleges; *College Administration; *College Presidents; Governance; Higher Education; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Leadership Styles; Liberal Arts; Teacher Administrator Relationship

ABSTRACT

The management styles of presidents of 10 Christian, liberal arts colleges were assessed, as part of research conducted at Christian or church-related liberal arts colleges that were identified as being well managed by one or more persons. The 10 presidents ranged in age from the late 30s to the early 60s, with an average age of 52.2. Their baccalaureate education involved a variety of disciplines with only one in theology, and all had earned doctorates. Eight of the 10 had previously been an academic vice president, and the sample had an average of 26.5 years of full-time experience in higher education. Seven management practices common to the 10 presidents were: the use of a President's Cabinet to advise the president significantly affected the college; the presidents emphasized relationships with the board and the faculty; they stressed planning; they insisted that the whole college be well managed; they insisted on delegation; they emphasized people; and they were interested and active in the community outside the campus. The presidents' attitudes toward the college's relationship with the church and its role in affirming the faith of students were also determined. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED280349

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT STYLE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

Kenneth W. Oosting

Milligan College

Paper Delivered to Deans of
the Christian College Coalition
Conference on "The Task of
Evangelical Higher Education"
at Wheaton College
May 31, 1985

HE 020 164

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kenneth W. Oosting

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT STYLE

IN THE

CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

In the Summer of 1984 I had a sabbatical in which I was able to begin research on management in Christian, liberal arts colleges. The research design included being able to identify a small group of these institutions which I did through a carefully selected sample of people who were interviewed and asked to identify well managed Christian liberal arts colleges. Many of these people were secular in perspective. About 170 different Christian or church related liberal arts colleges were identified as being particularly well managed by one or more persons. The final sample was chosen on the frequency and intensity of the recommendations. All colleges were to be four year, regionally accredited, under 4,000 students, have an overt Christian commitment and with a stable presidency. Ten institutions were in the final group and all were visited between July and November, 1984. The visits consisted of taped interviews with the presidents and other administrators as well as the gathering of print data such as catalogs, accreditation reports, president's reports, audits and biographical information.

Today I want to talk about one aspect of the research, the management style of the presidents of the ten colleges. But

before I talk about the management style of the presidents, allow me to comment on use of the terms administration and management. In higher education when we consider how a college or university is operated or should be operated, we usually call the process administration. When considering the process in a for profit business, we call it management. The trend is to call both for profit and not for profit operation by the term management. This does not mean, however, that we want or expect all of the same things to happen in the two spheres. Academics are typically horrified at the thought of a college being run like a business and there is no reason for a college to be run quite like a for profit business. There is reason, however, for college management to assume that some of the same principles do apply. The study of management is becoming a study of how all human organizations should operate in order to most effectively accomplish the goals. There are many kinds of human organizations, however, and not for profit higher education is one of them.

There have been several publications on the topic of either for profit or not for profit management worth noting because of their relationship to this study. In 1966, Patillo and MacKenzie did a study in conjunction with the Danforth Foundation with the title Church Sponsored Higher Education. [1] This excellent study

is partially out of date but its indicators of quality and description of major types (referred to by Dr. Askew on Tuesday) are still useful.

In 1982 Robert T. Sandin of Mercer University published his intellectually valuable work called The Search For Excellence, The Christian College In An Age Of Educational Competition.[2] In this work the Christian college itself is analyzed from its philosophical basis to the issues of faculty and the student culture.

Also in 1982 Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr. published In Search Of Excellence, Lessons From America's Best Run Companies.[3] Based upon a sound theoretical framework they examined forty-three corporations that met their six fiscal criteria. Their study led to the conclusion that these best run companies were very successful because they emphasized eight basics in management.

In 1983 George Keller published what has become probably the most widely read book in higher education for some time. Academic Strategy, The Management Revolution In American Higher Education challenges much of how colleges and Universities have been managed in the past.[4] He saw the golden age of higher education as being 1955 to 1974 with a shift then due to:

1) "The changing student clientele
2) The disintergrating college curriculum

3) The increase in competition within higher education

4) The technological imperative

5) The faculty conundrum (aging, low salaries and disparity between professional and institutional values)

6) The tightening grip of outside controls"[5]

Keller sees a leadership crisis in higher education although he has hope for a minority of presidents and he sees a need for better planning in order to forge an academic strategy for the future.

In another popular book, Levering, Moskowitz and Katz wrote The 100 Best Companies To Work For In America.[6] They identified twelve characteristics of these corporations that are management practices highly favored by employees.

In 1984 James Fisher completed The Power Of The Presidency in which he examined and advocated power utilization by college and university presidents.[7] Also in 1984 the Clark Kerr Report Of The Commission On Strengthening Presidential Leadership was released.[8] This was based upon interviews with over 800 college and university presidents, spouses of presidents, trustees and others. The study concluded that the college presidency is not in good shape and that effective leadership must be restored to the office. The Kerr study began with a conclusion:

"The second - not the first - most important responsibility of a board is to select a president; the first most important responsibility is to have a presidency that is effective and thus potentially attractive to highly qualified persons."[9]

Selection, entering, supporting, evaluating and exiting the presidency are discussed by Kerr.

In 1985 Bennis and Nanus completed Leaders, The Strategies For Taking Charge in which they concur that leadership in human organizations is badly needed.[10] They refer to the need for "transformative leadership"[11] which can change an organization, a concept from James MacGregor Burns' Leadership.[12]

I attempted something different than any of these studies by focusing on management style in a particular kind of organization. Unlike Peters and Waterman, finance was not a criteria for inclusion - instead a reputation for good management was used. As a result, I have not evaluated performance (e.g. I am not evaluating academic programs or the success of graduates). Instead, in looking at colleges reportedly well managed, I have tried to determine the manner in which it was in fact managed.

One aspect of this determination has been a study of the presidents. Data on the ten presidents has proven to be interesting. They range in age from the late 30's to the early 60's

with an average age of 52.2. Their baccalaureate education involves a variety of disciplines with only one in theology. Seven of them earned their first degree from a small liberal arts college with the other three being from large universities. All held the earned doctorate with four of them in higher education or educational administration, two of them in religion and the remaining four in a variety of fields. The Ph.D./Ed.D. granting institutions were from a broad geographical area but four were from universities in the Midwest and three from universities in the East (three are from one university) and all but two of the doctorates were earned in the sixties. Four had done post doctoral work. Only one graduated from the college where he now serves as President.

In terms of experience, eight of the ten had previously been an Academic Vice President (in three cases at the same college) while a ninth had been a Vice President for development and the tenth had served in other administrative capacities in higher education. Three do preaching but none had held permanent type pastorates. One had experience in business and only one was president of another college prior to the current appointment (another was in an acting capacity). Along with most of them having been Academic Vice Presidents, seven had full-time teaching experience at the college level.

The ten presidents had an average of 26.5 years of full-time

experience in higher education not counting time as a full-time graduate student. Half of the group had other experience at the same institution before becoming president which averages 5.4 years for those five. The presidencies range in length from three years to twenty-one years (as of May, 1985) with an average tenure of 7.7 years. The most frequent length of service was between six and nine years.

In terms of other interests, four were active scholars in their discipline. Their church affiliation today is the same as that of the college except where the college is non-denominational. Their past church affiliation, however, has been different than their present affiliation in seven instances out of ten. Lastly, their reason for entering the position was difficult to evaluate but the call of God and being asked by others were reasons often cited.

It is clear that in every one of the ten colleges, the president set the management style although, in some cases, another person was very influential. This influential person was sometimes a Vice President for Finance, sometimes the Academic Vice President and sometimes the Assistant to the President, but in no case was it the Dean of Students.

By an analysis of the taped interviews with the ten presidents, I was able to discern seven management practices found with most or all of them although there were, of course, some

variations from president to president. I have interpreted what was said and have grouped comments together where I thought this was appropriate. At some future point, I would like to use such as the Institutional Functioning Inventory and a management instrument to determine the extent of internal consistency of my findings. Please remember too that these findings are preliminary and could change after the hard data and the other interviews have been carefully analyzed.

The concept of a President's Cabinet was a practice that had a significant effect on the institutions. Meeting once a week or twice a month, this group always included the principal officers reporting to the President and, in some cases, others such as the Chaplain, Admissions Director and Communications Director. In one case the Student Government President and an elected faculty representative served as a full member of the group. When asked about the group, one of the presidents was typical in saying, "it is not a legislative group but it is advisory to the President." In fact, it appeared that the group was usually one in which decisions, when made there, were done by consensus but with a clearly understood right of veto by the President. In some cases the agenda was approved by the President or his assistant as much as the day before but the meetings were often dominated by items brought in a folder by the members. Much of these meetings was devoted to the sharing of information

and the opportunity to persuade others through discussion. It could be the beginning of an idea with reactions sought or it could be the semi-final draft. Faculty are typically not involved directly in cabinet meetings but there appears to be faculty trust in these groups. In some cases only the conclusions of these meetings are publicized with each participant pledging not to rehearse the individual positions leading to the conclusion outside of the meeting.

The presidents put an emphasis upon relationships with the Board and the Faculty although it was interesting in that very little was said about student relationships. The presidents talked frankly about board relationships describing them as the most formal but with considerable variation. One president wrote a position paper as he came to the institution about the Board-President relationship and used it as a basis for clarifying that relationship through group and individual discussions. The presidents varied in describing their Boards from weak to very good but tended to place a considerable emphasis upon influencing and educating that Board.

The faculty relationship tended to be a one on one situation in which the President talked to a faculty member at the initiation of either. Formal or group conversations tended to heavily involve the Academic Vice President. Presidents often used

MBWA (management by walking around) as a technique to get the viewpoint of others. Several presidents structured this into such as a brown bag lunch with faculty on an organized basis. The theme here was accessibility, taking the time to hear others, and this often included administrative and student groups as well. More than one president expressed the feeling that although he came from the academic community he was seen today as a president and not a collegue.

The third management practice I found was a belief in planning. Keller documents well the move toward strategic planning in higher education. The presidents almost unanimously believed in planning and think that plans should be written. The presidents concentrated on the need for the plan to emphasize directions or concepts rather than specific actions or events and thus wanted the plan to remain flexible and workable. Their own vision is an important part of planning yet this group tended to be very humble and spoke of the need for broad participation in both the evolution and periodic review of the plans. This is not to say that vision was not important. In fact, that vision was a dominant force for leadership on the campus. That vision, however, had become a part of planning only after the President persuaded others of the desirability of that vision. It is significant to add that shared institutional purpose is strong at these colleges so that a vision reflecting that purpose is favorably received as an indicator of

desired and needed leadership. One president had successfully used the planning process from the time he came to the college as the primary vehicle of leadership.

The fourth management practice is a general insistence that the whole college be managed well. The five basics in management - planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling - are basics that the presidents attend to well. This is particularly true in finance although it is clear that the presidents did not see finance as their major thrust. In fact, some talked about how they structure their board meetings to force them into academics and student development and away from the Board's preoccupation with finance. The leadership of these presidents is based upon taking the whole institution in positive directions and good management practice became a vehicle for its realization. The presidents were relatively unsophisticated in the field of management but read widely and made a determined effort to know what is happening in higher education.

Insistence upon delegation is a universal and number five of the management practices. Those who are directly responsible to the President confirmed that the presidents are indeed delegators. My analysis is that much of this is not because they believed so much in the principle of delegation as in the need to delegate so that they can get on with addressing the broader issues for the colleges, with developing and articulating a

vision, of providing broad leadership and of a strong belief that if you have good people you must give them ample room in which to provide leadership for their area. There is a minor tendency to even delegate too much and this is in areas where the President has limited interest and abilities. This creates a problem of lack of control over both quality and whether the action desired actually takes place. In several cases over delegation is compensated for by an assistant to the President who acts strongly in an area of little interest to the President. In other instances a Vice President fills the gap.

The sixth is an emphasis upon people. The presidents found themselves in a struggle between detail work that tends to keep them at their desk or commitments off campus and the desire to communicate well with their people as a means of telling them that they are important and appreciated. This relates to delegation because part of the effort here is to allow and encourage people to be creative as well as personally rewarded and appreciated. A part of this is the President's effort to keep all things and all people in a proper perspective for the organization as a whole.

The last management practice is the President's interest and activity in the community outside the campus. To some this was largely a church constituency such as a denominational structure which was typically visible in the Board of Trustees.

For all of them it is in the community where the college is located or the region surrounding it. Where the college was in a vicinity between the size of a small town up through medium size cities of several hundred thousand, the President was involved in and knew the local community.

Underlying these management practices was a value which had an important effect on management. The first attempt to study this value was in the Patillo and MacKenzie work cited earlier.[13] That study provided a typology of church-sponsored colleges and universities. In the process of my investigation, I have revised their typology in to three categories which more carefully reflects the view acceptable to the Christian college. These categories are independent (little or no church or religious influence), church related (in which the primary emphasis is on the relationship to a religious body) and faith affirming (in which the emphasis is on building and affirming the faith of students albeit in the context of a church relationship). Each president was asked where his institution might fall in this typology. Although some strongly emphasized the importance of church relationships, the presidents felt faith affirming best described their effort. The presidents were comfortable with the concept of integration of faith and learning without compromising either. They felt that being faith affirming is one of the distinctives of the college. Their attitude about how to accomplish this varied from those with an overt effort

to affect the faith of the student to those who felt the best way is to build an environment in which such issues would be raised in a setting supportive of religious commitment.

The statistics about the presidents have helped describe who they are. The seven management practices describe their priorities in managing a Christian, liberal arts college. As the study continues, other manifestations of Christian, liberal arts college management will become clear. The presidents, though, do manage these colleges well as human organizations particularly designed to provide a liberal arts education in a Christian environment.

FOOTNOTES

1. Manning M. Patillo, Jr. and Donald M. MacKenzie, Church-Sponsored Higher Education In The United States, Report of the Danforth Commission, Washington, D.C., ACE, 1966.

2. Robert T. Sandin, The Search For Excellence, The Christian College in an Age of Educational Competition, Macon, Mercer University Press, 1982.

3. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., In Search of Excellence, Lessons From America's Best-Run Companies, New York, Harper and Row, 1982.

4. George Keller, Academic Strategy, The Management Revolution in American Higher Education, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1983.

5. Keller, pp. 12-26.

6. Robert Levering, Milton Moskowitz and Michael Katz, The 100 Best Companies To Work For in America, Reading, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1984.

7. James Fisher, The Power of The Presidency, New York: Macmillan, 1984.

8. Clark, Kerr, Presidents Make A Difference, Strengthening Leadership in Colleges and Universities, A Report of the Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership, Washington, D.C., Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1984.

9. Kerr, p. 3.

10. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, The Strategies For Taking Charge, The Four Keys of Effective Leadership, New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

11. Bennis and Nanus, p. 217.

12. James MacGregor Burns, Leadership, New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

13. Patillo and MacKenzie, Ibid.